

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/11

Listening, Analysis and Historical
Study Sections A and B

Key messages

- Answers in Section A should aim to compare a number of different features in the performance, supported with reference to performance practice.
- Short answers in Section B were often tackled very well, but multiple-mark questions sometimes lacked enough precision to gain full marks.

General comments

As with last year's paper, candidates demonstrated a wide range of achievement on this paper, which is designed to test a variety of different aural skills and familiarity with repertoire. Many candidates last year struggled with the contextual questions at the end of B1 and B2, and there was some improvement in the equivalent questions this year. There were some impressive answers in the melody dictation and error-spotting questions; multi-mark questions asking candidates to describe a feature of the music sometimes lacked enough precision to score highly, however.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The two recordings provided candidates with much to compare, and many answers to this question were very successful. Virtually all candidates approached the question by comparing different features of the performance together, e.g. by discussing articulation in Performance 1 followed immediately by the same feature in Performance 2.

The majority of comparisons were detailed and covered a range of different performance aspects. Most of the listening was very accurate, although there was a range of ability demonstrated. The strongest candidates were able to use their knowledge of performance practice to explain some of the differing approaches to performance, but there is still room for some improvement in this area in many cases. Some less successful answers were often detailed, but rather failed to see the wood for the trees by focusing on minute areas of difference.

A number of candidates tended to jump to conclusions rather too easily, for instance declaring that the second performance was more 'authentic' because it was at a lower pitch and on baroque instruments, ignoring the many aspects of this recording which might have been seen to be less than 'authentic'. The most able candidates were able to discuss the extent to which performance practice had influenced both performances. However, there were fewer candidates this year who saw this as an exercise about judging the level of authenticity, which was welcome.

All candidates seemed well prepared for this question, and the best answers were very perceptive.

Section B, Topic B1 Instrumental Music

Question 2

The melodic dictation was tackled extremely well by virtually all of the candidates, with many gaining full marks. Some missed the accidentals in the final bar, but the rhythm was almost always correct.

Question 3

This question was well answered; not all candidates gained all four marks, but many correctly identified at least two of the features.

Question 4

This question was very well answered, with many candidates spotting and correcting both errors.

Question 5

- (a) This question was fairly well answered, although more candidates commented on the dialogue than the fragmentation. In a four-mark question like this, candidates should aim to discuss more than one aspect of the music.
- (b) This question was well answered.

Question 6

- (a) Very few candidates identified this key correctly; a common incorrect answer was E minor.
- (b) Well answered.

Question 7

Most candidates gained at least some credit here, but again there was a tendency not to make enough valid points to gain all four marks.

Question 8

- (a) A wide variety of answers were given here, sometimes correct but often not.
- (b) Many candidates answered this question well, even if they had not given the correct key in part (a). There were a number, however, who were not able to recognise that this was a recapitulation.

Question 9

The quality of answers in this question was, on the whole, better than last year. Many candidates were able to recognise the movement as being equivalent to a minuet or scherzo movement and made suitable comparisons, often with Beethoven. At the same time, there were still a number of answers that could only refer to other music in the vaguest terms, and did not really give the impression of familiarity with wider repertoire. There were also some candidates who did not address the specific direction to compare the movement with 'equivalent movements in any other 19th century symphonies' and instead compared the work with chamber music movements, or completely different symphonic movements. Whilst the Examiners aim to give credit where possible, it is not possible to award the highest marks where candidates have not directed their knowledge to answering the question.

Section B, Topic B2 Vocal Music

Question 10

This question was well answered in general.

Question 11

There were many points that candidates could have made in answer to this question, and most gained at least two marks. A number of candidates seemed to consider the orchestral introduction was the slow section of the music only, rather than the whole of the introduction until the voice starts singing, but this did not generally affect their answers as there was much to say about the slow section.

Question 12

There was a wide variety of responses here, which ranged from completely correct to no correct pitches.

Question 13

Candidates tackled this dictation with varying degrees of success; a few candidates completed bars 23 – 24 only and did not complete the melody in 27. Others were partly or completely correct.

Question 14

This question was well answered in general, with most candidates identifying at least some of the features. However, there were a number of answers in which the letters were placed well outside the range of bars given in the question.

Question 15

Well answered; many candidates spotted and corrected both errors correctly.

Question 16

This question was fairly well answered, with most candidates commenting on the rising pitch and climax at the end of the last phrase.

Question 17

This question was not answered successfully in general; relatively few candidates had a clear grasp of how continuity was achieved. Those who did make valid points tended to refer to the violin part in bar 23 which derives from the earlier oboe solo and is used several times, and also to the use of the triplet rhythm. However, most answers were somewhat vague.

Question 18

As with the equivalent instrumental question, there was a noticeable improvement in the quality of answers to this question this year. Many candidates successfully compared the dramatic orchestral introduction with operas by Verdi or Wagner, and others commented successfully on the musical techniques used to portray the drama in the vocal writing. Some answers were somewhat vague, however, and a few candidates were unable to write convincingly about any other operas.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/12

Listening, Analysis and Historical
Study Sections C and D

Key Messages

In **Section C** the **(a)** questions demand detailed knowledge of the Prescribed Work, coupled with analytical skills which allow candidates to address the specific points raised in the Question. In the **(b)** questions, candidates should demonstrate an understanding of the Topic as a whole, backed up by familiarity with a range of relevant repertoire.

In **Section D** the best answers demonstrate a broad understanding of various musical issues, drawing on experience gained in any part of the course. Candidates should be able to organise their thoughts into coherently argued essays, expressed in language of good quality.

General Comments

Most candidates were well prepared to answer the Questions in this year's Paper. The majority had studied Topic C3, Modernism in France, though a significant minority had studied Topic C2, The Origins of Opera. In both Topics there were some very thorough answers, though **Question C2(a)** was slightly less comprehensively addressed than the others.

In **Section D** there were answers to all five Questions. The majority chose D1, D2 or D3, while D4 and D5 were chosen by significantly fewer candidates. The best answers were very impressive, both in their understanding of the subject and in their command of language to express quite complex ideas. A number of candidates misunderstood the intention of **Question D5**.

Section C

Question C2(a)

Candidates approached this Question in a number of different ways, not all of which were entirely appropriate. The best answers focused on the contrasts between madrigalian choruses, monodies and structured, aria-like solos; others considered a number of different technical features such as diatonicism and chromaticism or homophony and polyphony. In almost all cases, candidates could find three appropriate sections of the opera to illustrate the points they were making.

A few candidates understood 'approaches to word setting' to mean 'examples of word painting'. They had no difficulty in finding three instances of the use of this technique, of course, but their answers were biased rather too heavily towards a single approach to word setting.

Question C2(b)

There were some good answers to this Question. Candidates were able to summarise the essential characteristics of *Prima Prattica* and *Seconda Prattica* and to give a number of well-chosen examples drawn from the work of various different composers. Some were also able to give a detailed account of the origin of the terms and demonstrated their knowledge of the polemical writings of members of the Florentine Camerata or their associates.

Question C3(a)

The majority of candidates had a good grasp of this Question and were able to point to several techniques and devices that are significant in the musical organisation of *The Rite of Spring*. These included the use of folk song, semitonal writing, bitonality, ostinato, irregular metre and orchestration which often involves extremes of instrumental range. It was good to observe that most of them could pinpoint passages later in the work that illustrate such techniques being applied. Some candidates, however, misinterpreted details of the score because of difficulties in understanding transposing instruments or C clefs.

Question C3(b)

Most candidates were aware that 'German late romanticism' in this context refers primarily to the influence of Wagner. Essays often focused mainly on Debussy, although a wide variety of other appropriate composers was mentioned. In the most comprehensive answers candidates knew that some of the music written later in the period was conceived as a reaction against both Wagner and Debussy.

Section D

Question D1

This was the second most popular Question in **Section D**. Most answers gave a fairly thorough account of the issues involved, with several candidates focusing especially on the impossibility of recreating the social contexts in which the music of the past was performed. It was perhaps surprising that a substantial number agreed quite vehemently with Vaughan Williams's assertion, albeit for rather different reasons.

Question D2

This was the third most popular Question. Candidates were generally quite secure in giving examples of works in which virtuosity is a prominent feature, but rather less confident in assessing its significance. A number found some difficulty in giving examples from two periods of music history.

Question D3

This was the most popular Question, so it was not surprising that the answers covered a wider range of ability than was demonstrated in other Questions. All but the most able candidates found it difficult to be very specific and several essays were rather discursive.

Question D4

A small number of candidates chose this Question. There were some extremely enthusiastic comments about live performances that had obviously made a great impression and the Examiners were glad to read essays that communicated such tangible excitement.

Section E

Question D5

Again, this Question was answered by only a small number of candidates. There was considerable confusion about the meaning of the term 'crossover'. Most took it to refer to composers whose work formed a kind of transition between one period of musical history and another; almost without exception they wrote about Beethoven. This misunderstanding of the Question was so widespread that the Examiners disregarded the original Mark Scheme and gave credit for accurate information, in whatever way the Question had been interpreted.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/02
Performing

Key messages

- Candidates were well prepared in both sections, and a very high standard was often achieved

General comments

The Examiners had a tremendously positive experience in visiting Centres for this year's performing examinations. In all cases they received a very warm welcome, and would like to thank teachers for the efforts they went to in organising the examination day, including the much appreciated lunches, coffee and cakes!

There is little to report which is not wholly positive. Virtually all candidates played or sang for the expected amount of time. The standard inevitably varied from candidate to candidate but was very high in general, and outstanding on a number of occasions. A few candidates performed pieces which were just too demanding for their current ability, and this sometimes impacted on more than one assessment area. Sometimes candidates started their recital with a piece which was very tricky to perform under examination conditions, and might have been more successful if it had featured once the recital had settled down. Whilst there is an understandable tendency to schedule pieces in chronological order of composition, there is no necessity to do this if the performance would benefit from a different order. There were a few vocal recitals where the singer might have been encouraged to sing to the Examiner, rather than at the floor or music stand; on the other hand, many vocal recitals were most compelling in their performance.

Improvising

As last year, only a small number of candidates chose to improvise, but they did so with success, using the stimulus well. They should be reminded that phrasing, articulation, dynamic variety, etc. are also expected when choosing this option – this was sometimes overlooked.

Accompanying

The standard of accompanying by teachers was excellent, providing the candidates with security and confidence for their performances. The Examiners do not take for granted how demanding some of the accompaniments are.

Sheet music

Copies of the sheet music were supplied efficiently in all cases.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/03
Composing

Key Messages

In the Stylistic Exercises Examination candidates should attempt to demonstrate the command of their chosen style that has been reached through sustained study during the course.

In the Stylistic Exercises Coursework candidates should submit five exercises in each of their chosen styles, representing the best work they have done at different stages during the course. These exercises should be presented with whatever comments and annotations have been made by the teacher during the course and initial drafts may be included in addition to the final versions.

In the Commissioned Composition section, candidates should submit a composition that closely follows the instructions given in the Commission. Recordings, whenever possible, should ideally be of live performances, and CDs should be playable on a domestic, single-standard CD player.

Section A: Stylistic Exercises (Examination)

The most popular choice was the Bach Chorale. Several candidates chose the 2-part Baroque Counterpoint, while examples of the Classical String Quartet and the Romantic Keyboard Accompaniment were fewer. Hardly any candidates chose the Jazz, Popular and Show Styles option.

Because of an unfortunate printing error some of the stems in the chorale melody appeared going down instead of up. The Examiners were alert for any problems that might have resulted from this, but it was evident that the candidates concerned did not appear to have been confused.

The levels of achievement represented in the examination seemed, in most cases, to be typical of the quality of work included in the Coursework submission. Most of the technical problems in the examination examples were, as last year, broadly similar to those found in the Coursework exercises.

Section B: Stylistic Exercises (Coursework)

Almost all submissions followed the Syllabus requirements very carefully. There were a few cases where exercises were not dated, and some in which it was difficult to see exactly which part or parts were given and which were the candidate's own work.

In several Centres the submitted exercise included a number of drafts, complete with the teacher's annotations and comments, from which the Examiners were able to see the candidate's development from an initial attempt to the final version. This is often helpful, but it is important that any drafts should be clearly marked as such, to distinguish them from the final version (which is the one that will be marked).

In a number of cases the exercises had been freshly typeset on the computer and submitted as fair copies with no annotations from the teacher. This is much less helpful to the Examiners, besides which the time spent in generating the fair copies might (in the busy life of Pre-U candidates) have been better spent on something else.

It is expected that the submitted exercises will begin with an *incipit* of an appropriate length in which the texture is complete. One part should then be given throughout the remainder of the exercise, according to the specific requirements of each genre as described in the Syllabus. It is not expected that further passages of complete texture should be given in the middle of an exercise.

The submitted exercises generally covered an appropriate variety of metre, key and (where it applies) texture. It is especially important that the difficulty of the exercises should be matched to the ability of

individual candidates. In some instances the exercises were quite difficult and the candidates concerned seemed to have struggled to find a satisfactory solution.

(a) Chorale Harmonisations

The work submitted often included chorales in both 4/4 and 3/4 time. There was usually a reasonable balance between examples in major and minor keys.

Common problems in candidates' work included **(a)** the correct identification of modulations, and especially the recognition of opportunities for passing modulation (secondary dominants) in the middle of a phrase; **(b)** the avoidance of awkward intervals in the part-writing, especially augmented 2nds and rising augmented 4ths; **(c)** the recognition of opportunities for using chord IIb or II⁷b at the approach to a cadence, especially before a tonic 6/4; and **(d)** the avoidance of consecutives, especially in cases where Bach follows a standard procedure.

(b) String Quartets

The most appropriate exercises were again taken from the quartets of Haydn and Mozart. Some of their less well known contemporaries were also represented in a few cases.

In a style where the harmonic rhythm often moves at a slower pace than the melody, it is especially important for candidates to learn how to recognise where the main harmonies should be placed: this was a very common difficulty experienced by several candidates. Other difficulties included **(a)** the recognition of accented passing-notes and appoggiaturas (and, correspondingly, knowing how to tell which are the harmony notes in phrases which include dissonant notes on a main beat); **(b)** keeping the texture interesting but not over-complicated; **(c)** understanding some basic features of string playing technique.

(c) Two-part Baroque Counterpoint

A wide variety of keyboard music was represented in the submitted examples, including pieces by Bach, Handel, Couperin and a number of English contemporaries of Handel.

The biggest single problem in this style is learning how to represent the harmonic structure of the music in an essentially melodic part. This difficulty was apparent both where a bass was added to a given treble and where a treble was added to a given bass.

(d) Early Romantic Keyboard Accompaniments

The submitted exercises included several songs (mainly, though not exclusively, by Schubert or Schumann) together with a number of instrumental pieces.

There were some very good submissions in which candidates demonstrated the ability to continue an accompaniment figuration given in the *incipit* and to handle quite complex chromatic harmony. Some candidates experienced problems in both these areas, and some found it difficult to identify the harmony implied by the given melodic part.

(e) Music in Jazz, Popular and Show styles

There were very few submissions in this style.

While most candidates could add a mainly appropriate bass to the given melody, the chord symbols often seemed to contradict the harmony implied by the melodic line and bass (taken together). Sections in which both melody and bass need to be completed in accordance with given chord symbols were generally less convincing.

Section C: Commissioned Composition

There were some very good compositions this year. The most popular choice was Ryōkan's *When all thoughts are exhausted*, but there were several pieces based on the pitch or rhythm cells and several sets of variations. The Rascall Flatts lyric attracted only a few candidates.

(a) Taigu Ryōkan: When all thoughts are exhausted

Candidates found a wide variety of ways in which to respond to the fragile beauty of this poem. Most took full advantage of the opportunities for word painting and there were some ingenious representations of 'the little stream' in line six. Similarly, the idea of turning 'clear and transparent' resulted in some very effective textures, often with the voice part lying quite high and with a widely spaced texture or the use bare 5ths in the accompaniment.

Several candidates manufactured the opportunity for a recapitulation by repeating the first two lines of the poem at the end of the song. Others approached the problem of making a satisfactory structure by including instrumental introductions, interludes or postludes; in some cases, however, these were longer than the sections of the piece in which the words were sung, so that the final result seemed to be more like an instrumental piece with vocal interludes.

Songs with piano accompaniment were slightly in the majority, although there were several with an ensemble, often of strings. In many settings a great deal of care had been taken over the accompaniment. In many ways, however, given the nature of the poem, the most effective settings were often expressed in music of disarming simplicity; those who developed elaborate accompaniments ran the risk of outweighing the delicacy of the poem.

The Examiners were pleased to note that most of the recordings were of live performances. The quality of both the performances and the recordings was often very high indeed.

(b) Rascal Flatts: *From Time to Time*

There were few settings of these words. Some candidates wrote an art song for voice and piano: the Ryōkan poem might have been more suitable for a song in this style. Others recorded what was clearly an improvised song in a jazz or popular idiom, then wrote down a few fragments with some verbal notes to indicate the order of events. This is not in accordance with the instructions given in the Syllabus, which require all compositions, whatever their style, to be fully notated.

(c) Theme and Variations

There were some interesting responses to this commission. Candidates sometimes found it difficult to compose a theme that lent itself to processes of variation. A number ignored the requirement that 'the Variations should exploit contrasts of texture, tempo, metre *and* dynamics', while others focused on only one or two of these features.

(d) Pitch and/or rhythm cells

Most of the candidates who chose this option used the pitches, though there were several pieces in 5/8 and a number which combined both cells. The pitch group, with its two augmented 4ths, led some candidates towards a harmonic style that was rather too reliant on diminished 7th chords. There were some pieces which developed canonic or fugal textures from the given material, often demonstrating a good command of the techniques involved. Some candidates began with an introduction based on the given cell(s), but followed this with a piece in which the given material did not appear at all. Those who choose this option should remember that the instructions clearly state that 'at least one of the given cells **must** be used in the *primary* materials of your piece'.

Scores, Recordings, CDs

Most scores were, as last year, produced on the computer. Candidates' proficiency in using complex notation programs was rather variable, though the best scores were very clear, accurately edited and comprehensively provided with performance directions, dynamics and other markings. When music is played in to the program via MIDI it does not always transcribe correctly. Candidates need to be careful about note groupings (especially the correct beaming of quavers and shorter note values), rests and enharmonic spelling: when scores contained inaccuracies in these matters, they could all have been avoided with more thorough editing.

Recordings of live performances are always preferable to sequenced versions, even if the performance falls short of the ideal. Candidates who write for instrumental or vocal forces which are available to them from among their fellow candidates (and, in some cases, their teachers too) are more likely to conceive their music with the practicalities of performance in the forefront of their minds. This point was evident in almost

all the compositions which were recorded live. If it is genuinely impossible to provide a live recording, then a sequenced performance is permitted. In such cases it is important that the synthesised sound should represent the real instruments or voices as closely as possible. In the recording of a song, however, there is currently no way of synthesising a voice part with the words, so a computer-generated version will invariably lack one of the most significant dimensions of the composition.

CDs were almost all submitted in formats that could be played on a single-standard CD player. There were a few which could be played only on a computer: Centres are asked to ensure that such formats are not submitted.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/41
Dissertation

Key messages

Reading needs to be thoroughly assimilated: first-hand experience of all the music to which it refers is necessary.

Presentation needs to be designed in such a way that all the evidence needed for a reader to understand any significant musical point in the text is incorporated.

General comments

The accuracy of Centres' assessments is proving to be at its most reliable in the 72 – 82 range and this, indeed, is where the majority of candidates for this Component tend to lie. Where differentiation begins to be problematic is both above and below this range. Several Centres substantially over-valued the work of candidates whose work was around 83 – 86 and the lowest candidates in a rank order were often insufficiently credited for their positive achievements. In general, Assessors chose an appropriate 'band' for each of the Assessment Criteria but what may seem very small differences within a band (up to 3 marks each time) may, eventually, result in an overall mark which is 15 marks too high or too low. A candidate's work may rightly have been assessed as lying in the 17 – 20 mark band for each of the criteria: the difference between 5 x 17 and 5 x 20 (the lowest and highest marks in that band), however, is 15 marks i.e. between 85 and 100.

All the candidates whose work was assessed as being above 85 had, indeed, worked extremely hard, reading and listening intelligently, and been diligent in their careful presentations. What distinguished the impressive work of the very best, though, was an intellectual 'edge' that enabled them to probe and question, and reach independent answers that were informed by a wider understanding of the musical context in which (often) a single work was situated. Their work was usually rooted in long-standing prior experience of the repertoire with which they were engaging.

For this reason it is important that candidates be encouraged to 'play to their strengths' and be allowed to pursue something that really interests them. Very obvious similarities of approach among all the candidates from one or another Centre suggested that candidates may, in these cases, have been over-directed, undoubtedly from the best of motives. This Component favours no repertoire or musical tradition more than any other: if a candidate's enthusiasm lies with an aspect of popular music, jazz, an Asian tradition or a little-known composer, the only possible barrier to pursuing it rests in the availability of adequate resources. The resulting Dissertation will be judged on the quality of the work, not the nature of the topic.

Many Dissertations dealt with a single work: while candidates had all obviously been made aware of the need to 'set it in context' it was perhaps this aspect that was most frequently over-marked by Centres. The first half of the top-band descriptor begins 'A wide range of scholarly reading/research' and many candidates did, indeed, fulfil this part: they had been assiduous in seeking out relevant scholarly books and articles. The second half of the descriptor, however, is the one that should clinch an assessor's judgement: how far does this reading 'inform a secure understanding of significant contextual matters'? The crucial words here are 'inform', 'understanding' and 'significant', i.e. to what extent has the reading been assimilated and applied independently to the music in question. Mining the sources for impressive-sounding quotations did not, by itself, demonstrate this, nor did (even with acknowledgement) reproducing brief histories of a genre which mentioned and made judgements about music which the candidate had not sought out and listened to themselves. The final criterion 'Communication of findings and acknowledgements' includes the word 'convincing' in its top three band descriptors. The Moderators frequently found that a Dissertation that appeared to be very scholarly e.g. in its references to 'the literature', was much less 'convincing' than a more modest, unpretentious one. The principal way in which the latter might be more 'convincing' was often that candidates were not only familiar with enough 'literature' to understand the context of their topic well but, most importantly, had engaged very directly with all the music that was relevant to the discussion,

independently, rather than shadowing the footsteps of another. The judgements might not be as sophisticated but they were wholly their own. The level of 'critical thinking' became evident in how candidates dealt with the music itself. Intelligent reading is a pre-requisite, but cannot be a proxy.

The requirement for 'Substantiation of Judgements' proved problematic for the Moderators in some cases. In general, the most convincing solutions were those of candidates who enclosed a CD of short audio extracts, with commentaries that pointed out exactly how these supported specific points made in the text. Candidates who referred throughout to bar numbers or rehearsal figures relied on their knowledge that their Assessor had equal access to a score. If the Moderator did not have a score immediately to hand then (s)he had to take it on trust that the Assessor would have checked the references for their accuracy. More seriously, however, in most of these cases the Moderator was being denied the opportunity to appreciate and understand fully how a case was being built up or a thread pursued. The title of the Component is Dissertation: implicit in such a piece of work is that it will be read by at least one person other than the teacher that the candidate knows so well. When guiding candidates on how they should 'communicate' their findings ('presentation'), Supervisors should remind them that their eventual 'audience' is person or persons unknown, i.e. they must consider very carefully how best to 'communicate' exactly what they mean.

The role of a Teacher/supervisor/Assessor is a complex one, not so much 'three-persons-in-one' as movement along a continuum. Teachers need to be sensitive to what is appropriate at each part of the process. It was clear from some Assessors' comments that the final judgement was sometimes not made entirely on the 'examination document' alone i.e. the final text of the Dissertation, but included an element of evaluation of the candidate's work over the course – 'progress' or 'how the candidate applied him/herself to the task'. It is admittedly very difficult to put out of one's mind the close knowledge one has of a candidate's abilities, strengths and limitations when the final text that a Supervisor has been shepherding along is presented.

Some Centres with a considerable number of candidates had used two Assessors. Inevitably, there was a slight difference in flavour, or tone, between the two sets of comments, but it was sometimes sufficiently marked to call into question whether a thorough internal 'standardisation' process had been followed.



PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/42
Advanced Recital

Key messages

- Recitals were very well prepared, and the standard was often very high indeed.
- The accompanying project is worth 30% of the marks and candidates should ensure sufficient time is devoted to the listening and writing of this project.

General comments

The Moderators greatly enjoyed hearing and seeing the work of candidates in this component, which demonstrated a very high level of achievement overall. A variety of programme types was heard, sometimes consisting of just one work (usually either a concerto or a song-cycle) or a mixed programme; either approach is equally welcome. The choice of music was almost always appropriate; some of the programmes were very ambitious but the music was rarely beyond the technical capabilities of the candidate. Centres are reminded that the recital should be performed in front of an audience; there were occasional recordings where it appeared that the recital was perhaps a little less formal than might have been expected.

Written project

There was a definite improvement in the written project this year; most candidates seemed to appreciate the importance of the project which carries 30% of the marks in this component. The greatest weakness last year was in projects which failed to link the listening to the candidate's own performances. This had been addressed in most cases this year, with a clear link provided. Some less successful projects this year got bogged down in great detail over tiny points of detail, and others seemed very concerned with comparing the recordings against the score for occasional wrong notes. Candidates should be reminded that the purpose of the project is to help with the preparation of their own performances, by focusing on important areas of interpretation. There is no expectation that candidates should be copying what they hear on the recordings, but they should understand the range of decisions they need to make when preparing their interpretations, and make their own choices accordingly. The accompanying CD is extremely important in supporting the project; the choice of excerpts was sometimes indicative of less than focused listening, e.g. by providing the whole performance rather than short excerpts.

Marking

As last year, the marking of the candidates' work was always carefully reasoned with helpful comments on the mark sheets. The Moderators made some adjustments to the marks given by Centres to ensure a consistent application of standards, but the mark scheme is generally being applied well; feedback has been sent to individual Centres on the marking.

DVDs

Most of the DVDs worked well, but there were a few problems this year with some of the recordings which did not always play back smoothly. It is essential therefore that an audio recording is also made, ideally on separate equipment, so that there is always a back-up copy of what is a major recital. A few recitals would have benefited from a slightly wider camera angle allowing a better view of the recital as a whole, but in general the quality of filming was very good.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/43
Free Composition

Key messages

- The work should extend the skills demonstrated in Component 3 to gain the highest marks.

General comments

There were slightly more submissions this year, but again only a small number of candidates chose this component. The work submitted was rather variable in quality and so generalisations are difficult. At best, the compositions demonstrated a very high level of creative ability, combined with technical skill and attention to detail. However, there were some pieces which did not really extend the candidate's compositional skills beyond the level expected for the compulsory composing component of the course, and were therefore much more limited in their scope.

Written commentary

Candidates are required to provide a written commentary which describes the expressive intention of the pieces, how the contrast has been achieved, an account of the process of composition, a list of the music studied in preparation, and explanation of the ways in which this listening was (or was not) helpful and an evaluation. This commentary is worth 20% of the marks for this component and candidates should ensure that it is given due attention. Not all commentaries addressed the areas expected.

Marking

Feedback has been provided to individual Centres. In general, it is important to check that the written commentary covers all of the points listed above when marking this aspect of the work.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/44
Music Technology

Key messages

- The work submitted was of an excellent standard.

General comments

The work submitted was excellent, demonstrating both creativity and a high level of technical ability.

Written commentary

Written commentaries were very detailed indeed, explaining the process of completing the coursework clearly and thoroughly from both a musical and technical angle.

Marking

Feedback has been provided to individual Centres.